

So I would just say to my colleagues: You yourself are on record here in the U.S. Senate talking about what kind of economic devastation would be caused if the United States defaults on its debts if we don't lift the debt ceiling. You know what that action would mean for American families because you have said it here on the Senate floor and around the country. So don't threaten the American people and our entire economy with something that you know to be so irresponsible.

I will end with this: You should do the right thing and join with Democrats in lifting the debt ceiling to pay for bills that are already due and owing and that you voted for. But, for goodness' sake, if you don't want to do the right thing, at least get out of the way. At least don't use the filibuster to prevent Democrats from doing the right thing for the country. That is a cynical ploy. I don't know what the political calculus is.

I have heard the Republican leader say that he didn't want the Biden agenda to succeed, but, for God's sake, let's put country first, and let's make sure that we do the right thing for the American people. Let's lift the debt ceiling. Let's pay our bills on time, as we have done every year throughout our history.

I urge my colleagues to either do the right thing on the vote or get out of the way and help the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATION OF SARAH BIANCHI

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate confirmed the nomination of Jayme White to serve as a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative. Today, the Senate has an opportunity to fill another important position following a debate on President Biden's nomination, Sarah Bianchi, for that role.

I am just going to speak briefly and outline a few key reasons why Ms. Bianchi is the right person for this important job and why the Senate should confirm her nomination today.

She is a longtime, accomplished member of the Biden economic team. She has worked in a host of settings during her time in public service: the Office of the Vice President, the Domestic Policy Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and as a staff member here in the Senate. She brings valuable experience in the private sector to her nomination as well. She has helped build a strong Biden economic agenda that is focused on making sure that all Americans have the opportunity to get ahead.

With respect to the key issue of trade, which is under the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee, that means fighting for American workers and American businesses and cracking down on the trade cheats that will flagrantly try to rip off jobs and economic growth.

The variety and the depth of Ms. Bianchi's experience in public service

will be a big asset to Ambassador Tai and the team at USTR.

When the Finance Committee voted on Ms. Bianchi's nomination, she was approved by a vote of 27 to 1. I often say that it is a struggle to get a bipartisan group of 27 Senators to even agree on buying a TUP, but supporting the Bianchi nomination is clearly a bipartisan proposition on a vital economic position.

In fact, all of President Biden's USTR nominees that have come before the Finance Committee, I am pleased to say, have gotten strong support from both sides of the aisle; for example, a longtime staffer of mine, Jayme White—80 votes yesterday, 80 votes, with strong support, I might add, from business and labor. It is because these individuals are focused on getting beyond some of the old theories about trade—free trade, fair trade, and the like. What really brings Democrats and Republicans together is trade done right.

That is what Ms. Bianchi is all about. When she is confirmed, she will take on a challenging portfolio at USTR, which includes Asia, Africa, investment, services, textiles, and industrial competitiveness.

The headline in that list, of course, is taking on China. The Finance Committee has worked hard on policies designed to take on China's many trade rip-offs. There is China's use of forced labor, for example, massive unfair subsidies that destroy any semblance of a level playing field, theft of intellectual property, and the Great Firewall and censorship of the internet extending beyond China's borders. These abuses, these rip-offs, directly threaten American jobs, innovations, and values from sea to shining sea.

For the U.S. Senate, part of how Members must address these issues is confirming highly qualified and experienced nominees like Sarah Bianchi, whose job will include confronting China directly. The Senate simply can't afford to leave this important Deputy USTR role open any longer. Now the Senate has a top-notch nominee before us.

I support Sarah Bianchi fully. Twenty-seven members of the Finance Committee supported her earlier this year during our committee's markup. I urge Senators to vote yes on the Bianchi nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COUNSEL DURHAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last week, Special Counsel Durham indicted Michael Sussman, an attorney for the Hillary Clinton Presidential campaign. He was indicted for lying to the FBI.

The indictment gives example after example of the Democratic Party's bag of dirty tricks.

In September 2016, Sussman met with the FBI's general counsel, James Baker. At that meeting he provided information and data files that allegedly contained evidence of a secret communication between the Trump organization and the Russian bank Alfa Bank.

The evidence, however, was fabricated. The allegations about the Trump organization being linked with a Russian bank—these were false. The email server at issue was neither owned nor operated by the Trump organization.

But the lie in the indictment occurred when Sussman allegedly told the FBI general counsel that he wasn't providing the information on any client's behalf. He repeated the same to another government agency. Those assertions were apparently false. He was working for the Hillary Clinton Presidential campaign.

Now, interestingly, the indictment states that although Baker was allegedly unaware of the political affiliation of the information starting in April 2016, Sussman represented the Democratic National Committee and regularly met with the FBI. According to the indictment, the FBI failed to connect the dots. What Special Counsel Durham's indictment shows in significant detail, by the way, are the steps that the Clinton campaign and her Democratic allies took to dirty up Trump—and did so—with known false information.

Time and again, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have cast false information against Trump to tie him to a foolish conspiracy that he is an agent of the Russian Government. Time and again, when the evidence is made public, the Democratic Party is shown to be the master of the disinformation universe, and much of the so-called mainstream press fell for and peddled the falsehoods.

What's wrong with our journalists being journalists and investigating everything to the bottom rather than trying to not do their work and letting people get away with this sort of action?

Now I am going to take a few examples from the indictment. Notably, Sussman was working with an unnamed executive at a technology firm that had been offered a position in the Clinton administration, should she have won that election in 2016.

The information compiled and analyzed the false Alfa Bank information and, according to the indictment, "exploited access to non-public data at multiple internet companies to conduct opposition research concerning Trump."

To accomplish those ends, the executive enlisted "the assistance of researchers at a U.S.-based university who were receiving and analyzing Internet data in connection with a pending federal government cybersecurity research contract."

Now, amazingly, the indictment later says that the university accessed data of an unnamed executive branch agency through an unnamed internet company. That unnamed internet company possessed that data because it was a subcontract “in a sensitive relationship between the U.S. government and another company.”

Apparently, taxpayers unwittingly assisted the false-information campaign used against Trump by the Democrats.

I'd like to say that you can't make this stuff up, but that is exactly what they did. A researcher that worked to falsely connect Trump to Alfa Bank said, “We cannot technically make any claims that would fly public scrutiny.”

They also discussed faking email addresses to try and beef up some bogus false connection between Trump and Alfa Bank. Even the unnamed tech executive essentially said the Alfa Bank data was a “red herring.”

One email in the indictment even says in part:

The only thing that drives us at this point is that we just do not like [Trump]. This will not fly in the eyes of public scrutiny. Folks, I am afraid that we have tunnel vision.

They recognized that what they were doing lacked any factual support, yet Sussmann, the Democrats, and the Clinton campaign proceeded ahead anyway.

Even more than that, Christopher Steele reportedly got his information about Alfa Bank from Sussmann and included it in the Steele dossier. The indictment clearly shows the depth to which the Clinton campaign went to smear Trump—smear—with false evidence and plant it with the liberal media, who then willingly ran with it—and probably smiled as they ran with it. And here we are, years later, with a country that has been almost torn apart because of the Democratic Party's fake evidence against Trump.

Special Counsel Durham stated on December 9, 2019, in part, relating to the Justice Department inspector general's report on Crossfire Hurricane, “last month we advised the Inspector General that we do not agree with some of the report's conclusions as to the predication and how the FBI case was opened.”

Special Counsel Durham has had several years to investigate and bring a case forward. We have seen two instances where folks have been charged with a crime, one already pleading guilty.

One must not forget the Obama-Biden Justice Department's and the FBI's blatant misrepresentations to the FISA court during the Crossfire Hurricane and other serious wrongdoing, much of which was uncovered by Congress and the inspector general.

On June 29 of this year, Senator JOHNSON and I asked Attorney General Garland if he agrees with then-Attorney General Barr's statement that any Durham report be submitted in the form that will permit public dissemination.

On July 13 of this year, Attorney General Garland said that he agrees.

Special Counsel Durham, let's see what you have got, and we will be able to see it when the report comes out.

PRIVATE DEBT COLLECTION PROGRAM

Mr. President, on one other matter, shorter than I just had, news accounts continue to mention plans to increase IRS enforcement funding and to impose onerous reporting requirements on sensitive banking information to the IRS.

These proposals raise many concerns, particularly in light of questions regarding the ability of the IRS to protect taxpayers' information. Even this year, we had a whole bunch of stuff go public of private taxpayer information that, by so doing, violated the code to protect the privacy of taxpayers.

However, I want to now discuss an existing IRS program that's already collecting hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid taxes and doing it annually. I am referring to the program called the Private Debt Collection Program that uses private contractors pursuing tax debts that the IRS would otherwise not pursue. This program was enacted as part of the infrastructure legislation signed into law 2015.

Each year since then, annual updates on the program's finances document very well the growing success of this program that is done by private debt collectors. As of the end of the fiscal year 2020, the program had collected nearly \$1 billion in unpaid taxes. After accounting for the program's cost, it has returned more than \$678 million in net revenue to the Treasury. Of that \$678 million, more than \$458 million was from the fiscal year 2020 alone.

Every year the program is allowed to function, it brings more and more money into the Treasury. At the same time, it generates resources the IRS uses to hire additional tax collection personnel. To date, the program has enabled IRS to hire many new employees.

The recent IRS update for the current fiscal year 2021 continues this trend. Through June, the Private Debt Collection Program has provided more than \$700 million in net revenue to the Treasury. In other words, in the first 9 months of fiscal year 2021, the program has more than doubled the revenue it has returned to the Treasury. The longer this program is allowed to work, the more successful it becomes.

The proposals being put forward by my colleagues across the aisle are based on the premise that by spending more money, the IRS will collect more money. The Private Debt Collection Program brings in money without spending taxpayers' money.

Despite the obvious benefits of this program, I am very concerned that the IRS has suspended providing additional cases to the program until the end of September. Commissioner Rettig assured me in responses to written questions that the additional cases would be provided on September 27.

I am going to hold Commissioner Rettig to that statement and, in the

upcoming days, expect to see him keep his word to me.

All the handwringing over spending more money to increase IRS enforcement and information reporting shows the serious issues involved in those proposals.

The IRS Private Debt Collection Program is proven to collect taxes already owed, allows the IRS to hire more personnel, and costs nothing up front. Anyone serious about closing the tax gap should support and encourage the full use of this program, the Private Debt Collection Program.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. I would ask unanimous consent that, at the end of my remarks, the scheduled vote take place.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, I want to say a few words about some of the important budgetary issues that Congress is now facing. I want to focus on the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill, but before I do that, I want to comment on the looming debt crisis that we face.

The Republican leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, this morning once again reiterated that the Republican Party will not vote to lift the debt ceiling; and in an extraordinarily irresponsible manner, Republicans have indicated that they will not pay the debts incurred under the Trump administration.

In his statement, as he has done time and time again, Senator MCCONNELL implies that this debt ceiling has something to do with future spending. It does not.

In his statement, as he has done time and time again, Senator MCCONNELL implies that this debt ceiling has something to do with future spending. It does not. Like anyone who owns a credit card, the payments that are made are for past spending—in this case, spending incurred under the Trump administration.

Let us be clear. If the United States, the largest economy in the world, defaults on its debt, it will plunge not only our country but the entire global economy into what could become a severe economic depression. That means massive unemployment, higher interest rates, severe reduction in government services, and possible cuts in such programs as Social Security and Medicare.

The irresponsibility of the Republican leadership is not just something that I worry about. According to press reports, former Republican Secretaries of Treasury Hank Paulson, who worked under George W. Bush, and Steven Mnuchin, who worked under Donald Trump—Republican Secretaries of the Treasury—both of them visited with Senator MCCONNELL to make the case about the need to extend the debt ceiling. They understand, as I think all of